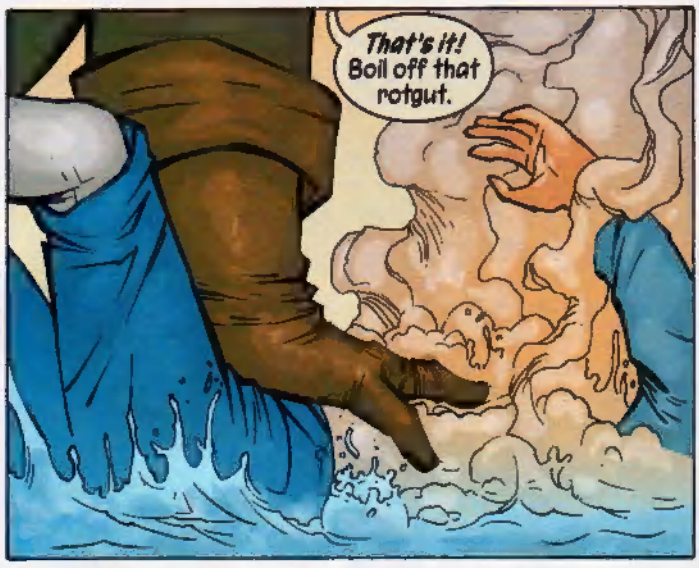
1602, London.
Here now, steady on! Drop the pig-sticker before ye hurt someone!
You don't want to be doing this, me young bravo!
She's too good for the likes of him! Why can't she see that?!
What, and you're her dream mate, are ya?
Shut yer hole, you! He's an armed drunk! Ain't nothin' more dangerous! Ya wanna make it worse?
I was just trying t--
God's teeth, stop trying!
DORRRIIISSS!!
I'm coming for you, Mistress Evans, yes I am! That great pig lord of yours won't have you!
You're mine and mine alone!
Or my name isn't James Storm!

It's *not*, ye flamin' idjit. It's *John Storm*. *Not* that ye be doin' the name *proud* with all your shenanigans.
Hey! Watch it!
Ye watch it! Ye be the one who fed him the drink. I should let him scramble yer giblets, so I should, and count it as just reward.
At last! Lord Wingfoot... *this* is the reckoning! You *desire* Mistress Doris Evans?
Then *have at you!*
CHNK
Huh.
What about his bill?!
Eat it and choke on it.
This isn't over!
Aye, it is.
:glub:
And ye'll *stay* in that horse trough 'til ye sober up.
:glub: :glubbbb:
C'mon, c'mon, don't make me wait all damned day.


That's it! Boil off that rotgut.

About bleeding time.

:Ack: :koff:
What...?
Who...?
It's me.
Grimm...?

Aye, and it's grim tidings I bear.
You've been acting in Shakespeare's plays too long. You've picked up his penchant for bad puns.
He's why I'm here. Von Doom's kidnapped him, and if we don't save him, King James'll have us for the chop!
Now let's go.

What the hell happened to my sword...?

I said come on! For Will's sake!

"God only knows what that bastard has done to poor Will so far."
Latveria.
From this day to the ending of the world, But we in it shall be remembered— We few, we happy few, we band of brothers...

For he to-day
that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he
ne'er so vile,
This day shall
gentle his condition;
And gentlemen in
England now abed
Shall think themselves
accurs'd they were
not here,
And hold
their manhoods
cheap whiles any
speaks
That fought
with us upon Saint
Crispin's day.

Bravo! Brilliant! A...a masterpiece!
I couldn't have done it better myself, and Lord knows I've tried!
You're too kind.
Not at all, Count von Doom. You were Henry incarnate.
I chose to regale you with that speech for two particular reasons. Would you like to hear them?
How could I not?
We are to become a band of brothers, in a sense.
These, the four who are frightful, plus you, myself, Natasha...we are to join in a grand adventure.
You will write of it with such magnificence that, indeed, those abed in England will curse that they were not a part of it.
And... the second reason?
You had Henry speak of the ending of the world. And so it will be.
Except it will not be CHRONOLOGICAL...but GEOGRAPHICAL.
The sort of adventure that will make strong men cry.

AAAAAHHHHHH!!

Yer just makin' it *harder* on yerself.
Face facts: von Doom ain't coming for you. You're on your own. Tell us where he took the bard and what he's got planned...

G-go to *hell*...

'Case you ain't noticed, I'll do just *fine* there.

King James wants ya t'speak. I want ya t'scream. If one should lead *t'other*, that's...

Wha--?
Eh?

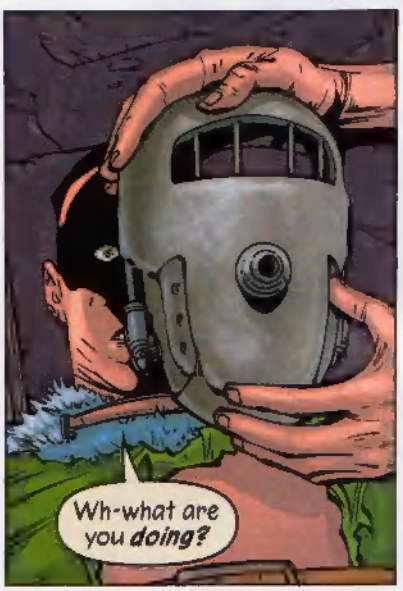
AAAHHHH!!

:OoOoOfFfF!!

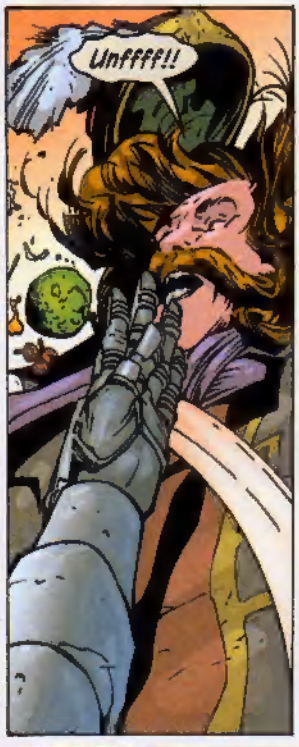
Reed, why couldn't we just ask James for permission to interrogate him?
Because, John, I've neither the *time* nor *inclination* to explain to His Highness why my more subtle questioning methods are superior to brutality.

Now bring the equipment and make haste.
Grimm could have simply knocked the door down.
Grimm is readying *The Fantastick*, as you know.

Let's hope he's readying it to be destroyed by Otto von Doom. For that is the only future you have to look forward to--

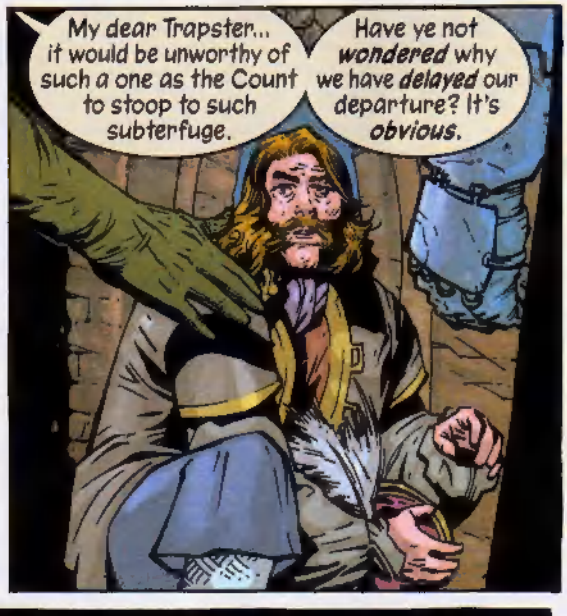

Wh-what are you ***doing?***

And natcherly the henchman is feeding him falsehoods, right?
Falsehoods?
Aye, of *course*. In order to throw him off the--


Unffff!!

FALSEHOODS?!

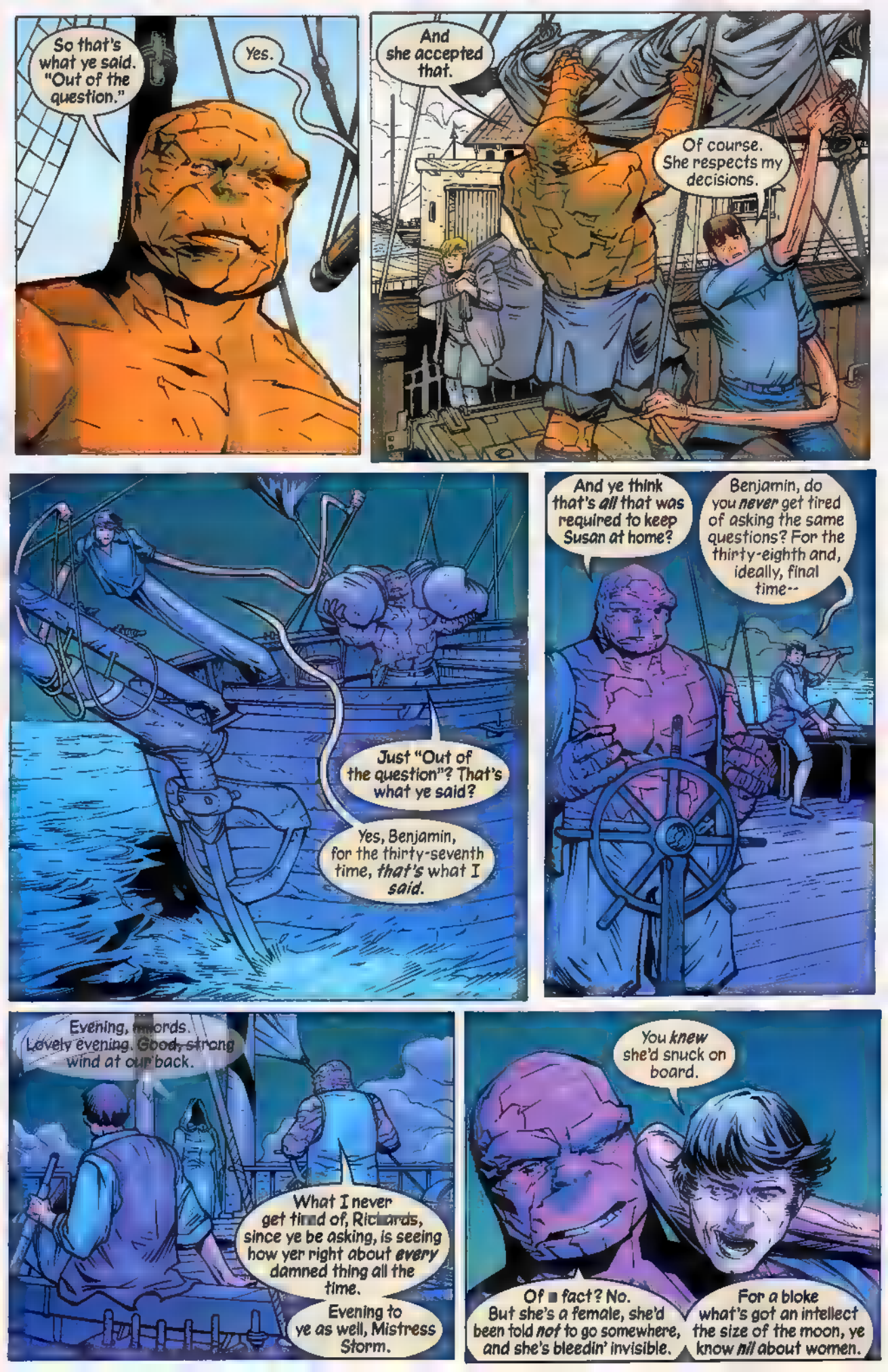
If I may be so bold as to explain, Count von Doom.
Do so, Wizard, and be quick about it.
And REMOVE your hand lest you be sent to a PERMANENT remove.


My dear Trapster... it would be unworthy of such a one as the Count to stoop to such subterfuge.
Have ye not *wondered* why we have *delayed* our departure? It's *obvious*.

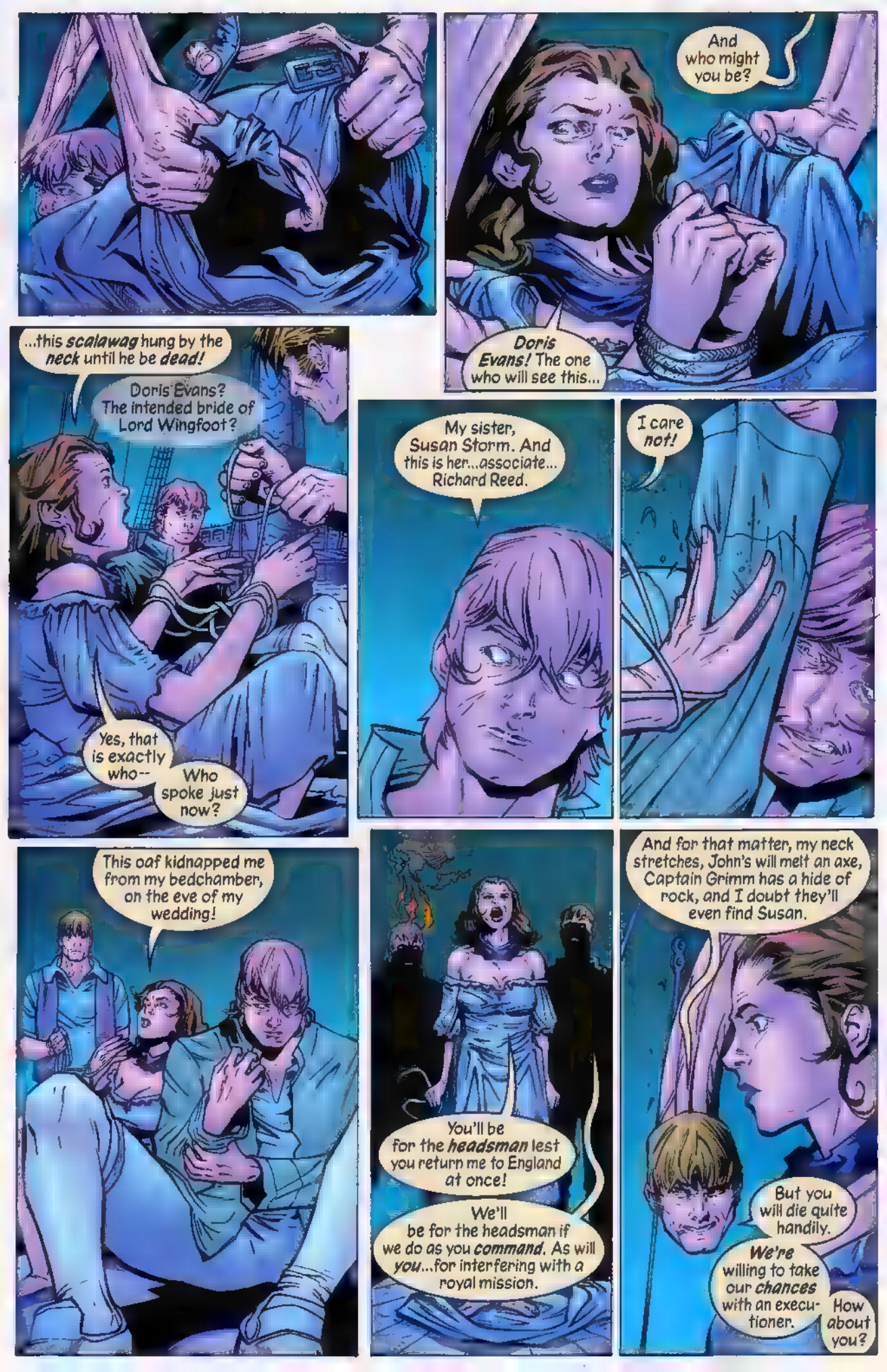
The challenge of the voyage is insufficient for *true* drama, Odysseus notwithstanding. There must be an *opponent*, or *opponents*.
We are allowing time...for the Four from *The Fantastick* to *catch up* with us.

Just so, Wizard.
Just so.

Just so that I *understand* this, Reed...
...the two of us, and John and Ben...we went our separate ways. Ended our mutual adventures, mostly to pacify the obsessive fears of King James.
You said you were *relieved*. *You* said it was best for the future interest of our child!
Indeed I did. Hmm. I thought I had more methyl trichloride here...
And now, suddenly, James has *need* of us...and off you go, without question?
As you well know, Susan, I am a rather *pliable* individual. I bend with the breeze.
After sneaking off with my brother and breaking into the King's dungeons, no less?
It was necessary to--
Susan, please release my head.
What is "necessary," Reed, is that we are honest with each other!
A valid observation, and one I will take into consideration for all future--
Whither thou goest, so do I.
Out of the *question*.


So that's what ye said. "Out of the question."
Yes.
And she accepted that.
Of course. She respects my decisions.
Just "Out of the question"? That's what ye said?
Yes, Benjamin, for the thirty-seventh time, *that's* what I *said*.
And ye think that's *all* that was required to keep Susan at home?
Benjamin, do you *never* get tired of asking the same questions? For the thirty-eighth and, ideally, final time--
Evening, Richards. Lovely evening. Good, strong wind at our back.
What I never get tired of, Richards, since ye be asking, is seeing how yer right about *every* damned thing all the time.
Evening to ye as well, Mistress Storm.
You *knew* she'd snuck on board.
Of fact? No. But she's a female, she'd been told *not* to go somewhere, and she's bleedin' invisible.
For a bloke what's got an intellect the size of the moon, ye know *nil* about women.

Susan! Your presence here is *wholly* irresponsible! We have our child to consider!
As I have his father to consider, Master Richards. And I believe your chances of returning are heightened by my presence.
Your sister is the most *aggravating* woman in the world, John.
In all fairness to Susan, Reed, you haven't *met* all the women in the world.
What are you doing, John? Ben could *use* your aid.
Oh, I'm... fatigued. I'm sure you'll understand if--
:mfffff:
Jonathan...
Did I just hear some...*one*... stirring within yon bag? A moaning?
What? This bag? Nay, 'tis merely your *imagination*. Surely the creaking of *The Fantastick*'s boards simulated ■ moaning or--
Let me out of here, you poxy bastard!
Blood and thunder, how the *hell* did she get that gag off?


And who might you be?
Doris Evans! The one who will see this...
...this scalawag hung by the neck until he be dead!
Doris Evans? The intended bride of Lord Wingfoot?
Yes, that is exactly who--
Who spoke just now?
My sister, Susan Storm. And this is her...associate... Richard Reed.
I care not!
This oaf kidnapped me from my bedchamber, on the eve of my wedding!
You'll be for the headsman lest you return me to England at once!
We'll be for the headsman if we do as you command. As will you...for interfering with a royal mission.
And for that matter, my neck stretches, John's will melt an axe, Captain Grimm has a hide of rock, and I doubt they'll even find Susan.
But you will die quite handily.
We're willing to take our chances with an executioner.
How about you?

How now, Natasha? You look VEXED.
Yes. I am.
Why so?
Do you truly wish to know what I am thinking?
You ■■■ my lover and my ship's captain. Of course I do.
I believe your ego has grown beyond your ability to control it. I believe it sends you hurtling toward your ruin.
This quest is a pipe dream. A city beyond the edge of the world? Madness. These "frightful" pirates are obviously liars and poltroons.
Indeed.
And then, to aggravate matters, you have me kidnap James's favorite playwright...an action certain to bring the Fantastick Four into the matter...
...and you delay our departure, by your own admission, to allow them time to catch up to us.
All this in a vain attempt to find a miracle worker in this reputed city who can repair your face.
Your damaged visage means naught to me, Otto. It is the man beneath who holds my heart.
I have changed ■■ MIND, Natasha.
About this futile quest?

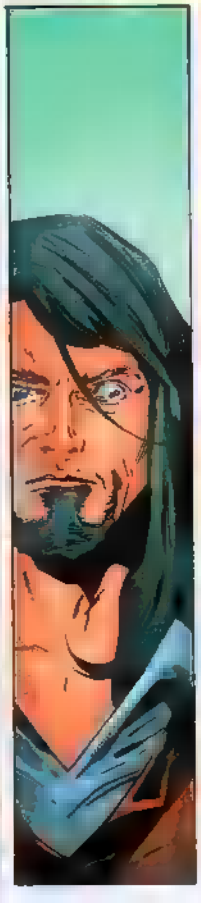
Wizard.
Yes, Count?
The captain and I have had...

...a falling-out.
I am naming you captain of this vessel now.

I am *honored*, Count.

Do not let me down, Wizard...

...lest I let YOU down.



Move, ye dogs! Open up some speed!
The end of the world won't wait *forever!*

I do not understand this. I mean... I do not pretend to be a sailor in training *or* vocation...
...but I see no wind. *None*. Yet the vessel is moving like lightning 'cross the waters. Am I correct?
Yes, Mistress Evans. *Quite* so.
How is this *possible?*
Look ye over the bow of the ship. Look behind us. What do you see?
The water churning fiercely. As if we are being...*propelled* somehow.
Right again. You are seeing the world's first propelser. An invention of Reed's. *The Fantastick* is no longer a slave of the wind's vagaries.
Amazing! But how does the...propeller...?
Propelser
Propelser. How does the propelser function? What keeps it turning?
It's *very* technical.

Where's that bleeding device that Richards *swore* to me he'd have for turning this damnable contraption! That "en-jun"!
You can't hurry *genius*, Grimm. I'm certain he works on it *every* spare moment.
If it weren't for me *strength*, we'd be *nowhere!*
And don't think we're not *grateful*.
That's *exactly* what I think!
Would that I cared.
Just like ye didn't care about that girl ye abducted.
You know nothing *about* it, Grimm. Nothing at all.
Don't be *daft*. I know *all* about it. I may not be a society type like yerself, but I hear the gossip, by the living God, I do.
Ye courted our Mistress Evans with all the charm ye could muster, but she was far more interested in Lord Wingfoot. And why not? A nobleman. Titled. Quite the catch.
He's a brute. A *godless* brute.
How lucky *ye* weren't betrothed to him then, unlike our Mistress Evans.
So ye challenged Wingfoot to a duel, and he *kicked* yer arse. By all accounts, ye were lucky he didn't cut yer damned fool head off.
After which ye slunk off, licked yer wounds, and then--when *this* business arose--ye grabbed some of Reed's more potent chemicals and put the young mistress to sleep...
...and now we have a right royal *mess* on our hands. Am I leaving anything out?
I love her.
Oh, well, it's *all right* then.

Project Pegasus
Devil's Point, Wyoming
A SNEAK PEEK AT ULTIMATE POWER #1
This has nothing to do with y'all.
You know who that is?
We *are* the Serpent Squad and we are here to take back what's been *stolen* from us.
You best not get in our way or I swear to God...
Do you know who that is?
'Course I know who that *is*...

It's the Fantastic Four.
And I am soooo turned on right now.
JOHNNY!
I call dibs on the blonde.
What is wrong with you guys??
Hey, you got to body wrestle the half-naked Namor guy- it's our turn.
You all disgust me.
I'm going to have to ask you to surrender right now.
With the pressure I'm exerting on you, you'll only be able to breathe for another 55 seconds.
They stole the Serpent Crown from us!!
They *stole* it!!
Who *are* you people?

BRIAN BENDIS

J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI

JEPH LOEB

GREG LAND

ULTIMATE POWER

THE ULTIMATE UNIVERSE VS. THE SQUADRON SUPREME

A NINE-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES BEGINNING IN OCTOBER

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